



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock

Arizona, Sedona Area, Oak Creek Spire

On October 6, at approximately 3 p.m., the Coconino County Sheriff's Office received a 911 call from a climber (Person 1) who stated she had broken her leg and was hanging in her harness on the last pitch of Oak Creek Spire. It was determined that Person 1 was on the North Face/West Crack route. During the call Person 1 stated that her climbing partner was going to maneuver her to a ledge so that she was not suspended from the rope. The weather was good with air temperatures in the high 70s.

Rescuers from Coconino County Sheriff's Office, Yavapai County Sheriff's Office, Sedona Fire District, and Arizona Department of Public Safety Air Rescue responded to the incident. It was determined that a helicopter short-haul rescue was the best option. Person 1 was successfully short-hauled from a ledge to a staging area and then transferred to an ambulance for transport to the hospital.

Person 1 was interviewed at the hospital and indicated that this was the climbers' first attempt at this route. Person 1 (age 32) had 10 years of climbing experience and is comfortable leading 5.10 traditional routes, and Person 2 (27) had 15 years of climbing experience.

Person 1 was following Person 2 on the third pitch, near the top of the route, during which the climbers must jump from a northern spire to the higher south spire. Mountain Project describes this section of the route this way: "Locate the proper jump, down on a lower ledge across from the other tower. Get some slack and make the leap of faith. Not a good idea to fall." Person 2 successfully completed the jump and Person 1 followed. Person 1 stated that she was a little nervous about the move and consequently she jumped with "too much force." She was able to grab a hold with her hands but struck the rock with her feet and sustained a bimalleolar fracture (broken ankle) in her right leg. Person 2 assisted in belaying her to a ledge to await the rescue.

ANALYSIS

The nearly six-foot jump-across move on Oak Creek Spire has some inherent risk, as it is impossible to protect either the leader or the second against a hard landing if the jump is misjudged. Person 1 stated that she jumped with too much force, and she had some bad luck with striking her leg in a way that broke the ankle. It was helpful that the team had mobile phone service and thus was able to call promptly for a rescue, just a few hours before dark. (Source: Aaron Dick, Coconino County Sheriff's Office.)

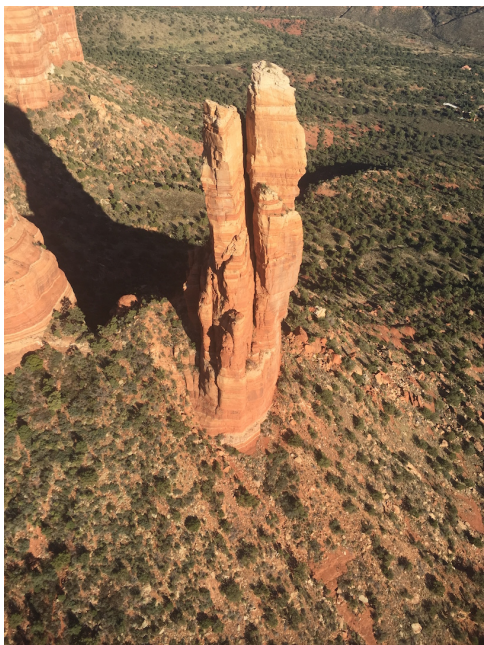
Images



A climber successfully making the jump move to start the third pitch of Oak Creek Spire, AZ.



Climbers awaiting rescue on Oak Creek Spire.



Oak Creek Spire from the air, clearly showing the lower and higher summits.



Oak Creek Crash

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